

Workers Cleaning Oil By Day, Inhaling Formaldehyde By Night
July 2, 2010

WASHINGTON, DC —U.S Reps. Charlie Melancon (D-La.) and Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) last night wrote the U.S. General Services Administration asking for answers on the trailers that are being used to house some workers cleaning up the oil from the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The trailers, originally provided to Gulf residents following Hurricane Katrina, were found to have unhealthy levels of formaldehyde, which is a carcinogen. The story was first reported in [The New York Times](#).

“First hurricane survivors were exposed to hazardous fumes in these FEMA trailers, and now – five years later – oil disaster workers are facing the same threat from the exact same trailers,” said Rep. Melancon. **“We want to know why these trailers are still being used as housing, despite the many warnings and safeguards that have been put in place to prevent this situation. Workers along the Gulf Coast face enough dangers in the oil spill clean-up, without unknowingly being exposed to another danger when they come home at night.”**

“There are oil spill workers who are cleaning up toxic oil by day and then inhaling carcinogenic fumes by night, sometimes with their families,” said Rep. Markey, who chairs the Energy and Environment Subcommittee in the House Energy and Commerce Committee. **“These toxic trailers are like a recurring nightmare for the people of the Gulf.”**

Congressman Melancon is also a member of the Energy and Environment Subcommittee.

In the letter, Reps. Melancon and Markey asked the GSA to explain how these trailers, which were never intended to be used as homes ever again, ended up being used for exactly that purpose. The Congressmen asked for details on whether proper procedures were followed when these trailers were sold, and what efforts are being taken to look into the matter.

Specifically, Reps. Melancon and Markey requested GSA address the following questions:

1. Please provide the Subcommittee with documentation regarding all sales of the formaldehyde-contaminated trailers. In each case, were all of the trailers sold in compliance with GSA’s requirement (1) that the purchase sign an agreement that the trailer would not be used for housing, (2) that the trailers clearly display a label reading, “Not to be used as housing,” and (3) that the purchaser read the documentation about the impacts of formaldehyde exposure?
2. Has GSA found any auctioned trailers that were purchased without the required signed agreement?
3. Has GSA discovered any of these auctioned trailers in which owners have failed to label the trailer as being unfit for habitation or have removed the required labeling?
4. How is GSA ensuring that secondary sales of these auctioned trailers are conforming to the original GSA requirements?
5. Has GSA determined if these trailers are indeed being used as temporary housing facilities as has been reported in *The New York Times* article? If so, what is GSA going to do to protect the health and wellbeing of workers who are responding to the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico?

If GSA is making no such efforts, why not?

Click [here](#) to read the full letter.

Congressman Melancon represents in Congress the areas of coastal Louisiana most directly affected by the oil leak, including Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary and southern Jefferson Parishes. The Deepwater Horizon platform was located 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana's Third Congressional District.

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